



State of Washington

## DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Mailing Address: 600 Capitol Way N - Olympia, Washington 98501-1091 - (360) 902-2200, TDD (360) 902-2207  
Main Office location: Natural Resources Building - 1111 Washington Street SE - Olympia, WA

### DETERMINATION OF NONSIGNIFICANCE (DNS)

**Name of Proposal:** DNS 15-059: DELISTING BROWN PELICANS AS A STATE ENDANGERED SPECIES

**Description of Proposal:**

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has evaluated the population status of the Brown Pelican, which is currently a state endangered species. One rule is proposed to be amended: WAC 232-12-014. WAC 232-12-014 identifies endangered species in Washington that are at risk of extinction in the state and are in need of recovery actions to restore populations to healthy levels.

Pursuant to WAC 232-12-297(6.1.1) and (6.2), WDFW is proposing to amend WAC 232-12-014 and is requesting that the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission adopt the Department's recommendation to delist Brown Pelican as a state endangered species. Rationale for this action are presented in the *Washington State Periodic Status Review for the the Brown Pelican*. The report provides an analysis of the factors cited in WAC 232-12-297(7.1.1) through (7.1.5) and considers all information relevant to the status of the species in Washington.

Brown Pelican numbers increased steadily in Washington from the 1970s-2011, from <100 during 1979-1986 to a high of >16,000 in 2009. This increase was likely due to cyclic changes in ocean conditions that affect forage fish abundance, and also, perhaps the recovery of nesting colonies in the Southern California Bight with the banning of DDT. California Brown Pelicans feed primarily on small schooling fishes, including Pacific Sardines, Northern Anchovies, and Pacific Mackerel. Natural fluctuations in ocean conditions and forage fish abundance have caused changes in pelican abundance in Washington in the past, and a crash in sardine populations has led to ~4 consecutive years of extremely poor reproductive success at their southern colonies. Although the recent breeding failures, unprecedented ocean warming, toxic algae blooms, and climate change present uncertainty about the future trend in Brown Pelican populations, robust numbers (>10,000) still occur seasonally in Washington, and they are not immediately threatened.

Draft versions of the *Washington State Periodic Status Review for the Brown Pelican* were evaluated by the scientific community, including both WDFW scientists and external scientists. Members of the public were also invited to review the draft periodic status review during a public comment period that extended from February 13 to May 15, 2015. After the close of the public review period, the Department prepared the final periodic status review and delisting recommendation. The public will have an opportunity to review the final periodic status review, delisting recommendation, and SEPA findings from January 9-23, 2016. The final listing recommendation is planned to be presented to the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission on January 22-23, 2016 and the Commission is expected to take action on the recommendation on February 18, 2016.

**Proponent/Applicant:** Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)  
Contact: Gerald Hayes, Listing and Recovery Section Manager  
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**Location of Proposal, including street, if any:** The range of the Brown Pelican in Washington includes coastlines, islands, estuaries, and marine waters within 20 miles of outer coast.

**Lead Agency:** Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)

WDFW has determined that this proposal will likely not have a significant adverse impact on the environment. Therefore, state law<sup>1</sup> does not require an environmental impact statement (EIS). WDFW made this determination of nonsignificance (DNS) after we reviewed the environmental checklist and other information on file with us.

We issued this DNS according to state rules.<sup>2</sup> We will **not act on this proposal for 14 days** from the date we issued the DNS. Agencies, affected tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on this proposal or DNS. We must receive your comments within 14 days of the date of this letter. The comment period will end at **5:00 pm on November 20, 2015**.

**Method of Comment:** The following procedures shall govern the method to comment on agency SEPA proposals. Comments received through these procedures are part of the official SEPA record for this proposal.

You can submit your comments any one of the following ways:

- Email to [SEPAdesk2@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:SEPAdesk2@dfw.wa.gov)
- Online at the WDFW SEPA website comment link at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/sepa/>
- Fax to (360) 902-2946;
- Mail to the address below.

**Responsible Official:** Steven Bell, back up for Lisa Wood

**Position/Title:** SEPA/NEPA Coordinator, WDFW Regulatory Services Section

**Address:** 600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, WA 98501-1091

After the comment period closes, applicants may view the updated status of this proposal on the WDFW SEPA website: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/sepa/>. Once the status is posted as final, applicants and permittees may take action on the proposal. When a proposal is modified or withdrawn, notice will be given in accordance with state law.<sup>1</sup>

If you have questions about this DNS or the details of the proposal, contact Steve Bell at the address, e-mail, or fax number above; you can also call him at (360) 902-2598.

**DATE OF ISSUE:** November 6, 2015

**SIGNATURE:**



Footnotes

1. RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c)
2. WAC 197-11-340(2).

SEPA Log Number: 15-059.dns